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ARTICLES:

(1) Change of government: "Foreign Minister Okada" begins diplomatic effort; How will "stubborn fundamentalist and pro-Asian politician" steer diplomacy?

MAINICHI (Page 2) (Abridged slightly)
September 12, 2009

Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) President Yukio Hatoyama told reporters on the evening of Sept. 11 at party headquarters: "I have it in my mind. But I'm not ready to reveal it to you," implying that he is working out the lineup of cabinet members, whom he will announce after his election as prime minister. He then returned to

his private residence. Hatoyama has been mum about his selection of cabinet members.

DPJ Secretary General Katsuya Okada, tapped as the next foreign minister, launched his diplomatic effort yesterday, with a meeting for about 30 minutes with U.S. Ambassador to Japan John Roos, arrived in his post just about three weeks ago, who called on Okada at the DPJ's headquarters.

During the meeting, Okada told Roos: "There are outstanding bilateral issues relating to the Japan-U.S. alliance and security arrangements. But what is important is that a sustainable bilateral alliance will continue and deepen over the next 30 to 50 years."

The Ambassador simply replied that he will work toward strengthening the bilateral alliance.

What Okada had in mind is the Self-Defense Force's refueling operations in the Indian Ocean and the realignment of U.S. Forces Japan (USFJ). "I proposed discussing these two issues," Okada said. He added that Roos did not say anything about the issues. Thus they avoided a confrontation.

Okada is 56 year old, five years younger than U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. He is known to be a "stubborn fundamentalist," and some have contended that he lacks flexibility. In meeting with U.S. Undersecretary of Defense Michele Flournoy in June in Japan, Okada insisted that U.S. bases are concentrated in Okinawa because the United States had occupied the island prefecture after World War II, and that the Japan-U.S. Status of Forces

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Agreement (SOFA) is not equal. Flournoy reacted sharply to his comment, sparking a heated debate.

Since he was a junior Diet member, Okada has had exchanges with top government officials and influential lawmakers of China and South Korea. He has his own channels of communication to Chinese Executive Vice Premier Li Keqiang, regarded as a possible candidate to be the next premier. On Sept. 9, Okada met with visiting Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Wu Dawei. Although Okada studied in the United States when he was a bureaucrat at the then International Trade and Industry (MITI), he is widely viewed as a pro-Asian politician, and Roos apparently met with Okada in a bid to assess his diplomatic stance.

"There are discussions on whether Japan should attach more importance to the United States or China. However, we value both China and the United States," Okada told a symposium held in Tokyo on Sept. 2 to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China. He took a stance of attaching priority to Japan's relations with both the United States and China. However, it is difficult to promote the DPJ's plan to create an East Asian Community with Japan-China relations as its core, while strengthening the Japan-U.S. alliance, the linchpin of Japanese diplomacy.

It remains to be seen how the DPJ will steer Japan's diplomacy with the United States. The DPJ refused to incorporate a call for the withdrawal of the MSDF vessels from the Indian Ocean in its agreement to form a coalition government with the Social Democratic Party and the People's New Party because it could tie the new administrations' hands diplomatically, according to close aides to Okada.

A senior official of the Foreign Ministry's North American Affairs Bureau said: "The amount of information, including diplomatic secrets, which Okada will obtain as foreign minister will greatly increase from the time he was an opposition lawmaker. I want him to sufficiently analyze the information and not to jump to hasty conclusions."

(2) Negative campaign produced opposite effect, according to survey on Lower House election; 60 percent of respondents say they had bad impressions of parties that criticized rival parties

A survey conducted by the Kan media society research group of the Japan Society of Information and Communication Research found on Sept. 11 that roughly 60 percent of respondents who viewed commercials of a political party criticizing its rival party during campaigns for the Lower House election had unfavorable impressions not of the party that was criticized but of the party that did the criticizing.

The LDP ran animated commercials criticizing the Democratic Party of Japan's (DPJ) policies on the Internet and distributed fliers or leaflets carrying such criticism. Pointing this out, Gakushuin University Professor Kaoru Endo said at a press conference on the 11th that it was the first full-fledged negative campaign in Japan. The survey found that the campaign resulted in the opposite of the intended effect. Endo said the results can be taken to mean that

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voters acted based on their sound judgment.

The poll conducted after the Lower House election - on Aug. 31 and Sept. 1 - surveyed the impact of the Internet on voters' voting behaviors, targeting 1,000 people including both men and women in their 20s through 60s.

According to the survey results, 45.5 percent of respondents watched negative campaigns, of whom 63.5 percent had unfavorable impressions of the party that did the criticizing. Thirty-three percent of those who voted for the LDP replied that they had unfavorable impressions of the LDP's negative campaign.

The proportion of respondents who felt information provided on the Internet was important reached 57.3 percent, topping 58 percent citing newspapers, and 75.5 percent selecting television.

(3) H-2B successfully launched, putting end to dependence on other countries and marking first step toward international contribution in space development

SANKEI (Page 3) (Full)
September 12, 2009

A new large-scale rocket carrying Japan's first unmanned space transportation vehicle was launched from the Tanegashima Space Center (Kagoshima Prefecture) of the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA) at 2:01 a.m. of Sept. 11. The HTV transportation vehicle filled with supplies for the International Space Station (ISS) was successfully put into its intended orbit. Japan is the fourth country to transport goods to the ISS, following the U.S., Russia, and Europe. The successful launch means that Japan has taken its first step toward making a full-fledged international contribution to space development.

The HTV, launched by the H-2B rocket, contains about 4.5 tons of goods, including food and other daily necessities for the crew aboard the ISS, as well as equipment to be used for experiments in Japan's Kibo laboratory module on the ISS. The vehicle is scheduled to gradually approach the ISS and berth at the station at an altitude of about 400 kilometers on Sept. 18.

After delivering the goods to the ISS and loading waste materials, the HTV will be separated from the ISS and burn up when it re-enters the atmosphere.

When setting up the Kibo module, Japan entrusted to the U.S. the task of carrying the necessary equipment aboard its space shuttles. In return for this contribution, Japan developed and produced the HTV at a cost of 68 billion yen. JAXA plans to launch seven HTVs, one each year, through 2015. The H-2B, developed jointly by JAXA and Mitsubishi Heavy Industries, is a two-engine rocket that is more powerful than the H-2A, its single-engine predecessor. The launch of the H-2B represents a significant step forward for Japan in the space development field.

With the successful launch, Japan will play a role in transporting materials to the ISS. Stepping out of the stage of just participating in experiments, Japan will take on the heavy responsibility of transporting materials on behalf of many other countries. With the establishment of its own transport means as a beginning, Japan also plans to develop a manned space vehicle in the

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future.

The vehicles capable of transporting goods to the ISS are U.S. space shuttles with the capability of carrying 16 tons of goods, a European transport vehicle (7.5 tons of goods) and a Russian transport vehicle (2 tons of goods).

The HTV is capable of transporting 6 tons of goods and large-sized loads that can be transported only by space shuttles. It can also carry replacement parts necessary to maintain the functions of the ISS.

After the space shuttles are decommissioned next year, the HTV will be the only means of transporting such important materials. The ISS is scheduled to be completed next year, but supplying necessary goods is indispensable for its continued operations. Given this, Japan will make an outstanding international contribution from now on. Visiting NASA Associate Administrator Bill Gerstenmaier commented: "The HTV is very significant for the ISS project."

In transporting necessary equipment to the ISS, Japan has depended on other countries in the past. In addition to developing the HTV and the H-2B independently, Japan will also control their operations on its own.

In the HTV, there is a room that can be entered by astronauts not wearing spacesuits. JAXA has envisioned a plan to upgrade the HTV to a manned space vehicle. The agency intends to accumulate a variety of know-how through the planned lifting off of seven HTVs.

Meanwhile, Japan succeeded in developing the H-2B rocket in a short period of time and at a low cost, demonstrating its credibility. It can load two large satellites, so the cost for lifting off one satellite can be reduced. Mitsubishi Heavy Industries expects that the H-2B will contribute to bolstering its competitiveness in the satellite-launch business.

(4) WTO talks: DPJ to adopt policy of protecting agriculture for time being; Switch to liberalization after Upper House election?

SANKEI (Page 1) (Full)
September 14, 2009

A senior officials' meeting of the World Trade Organization's new multilateral trade talks (Doha Round) will be held in Geneva, starting on September 14. The Nihon Keizai Shimbun learned on the 11th that the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) secretly coordinated with officials of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) responsible for the talks and decided to firmly maintain Japan's previous stance of exempting key domestic agricultural items, such as rice, from substantial tariff cuts. However, chances are that since trade liberalization is a basic policy of the DPJ's, the party might increasingly shift to a liberalization policy line in step with progress in talks at the WTO after the Upper House election next summer.

The DPJ had incorporated the promotion of agricultural liberalization in its policy manifesto. However, it has changed the stance in response to opposition from agricultural groups.

With the exception of Japan, leading countries participating in agricultural talks at the WTO agreed in principle at a ministerial

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meeting in July last year to set the proportion of key items eligible for exceptionally low tariff cuts at 6 percent at the

highest. Japan wants to see that proportion set at 8 percent. However, there is a strong possibility of Japan's being forced to make concessions on the rate of tariff cuts and expansion of the minimum import framework. Some party members said that should that occur, the DPJ, which will take over WTO trade talks from the LDP, will be left holding the bag.

The DPJ is concerned over the talks' impact on the Upper House election. A lawmaker close to the DPJ leadership emphasized to a Geneva-bound deputy vice MAFF minister that there is no reason to rush during the talks.

Farmers, alarmed about the agricultural market being liberalized, are shifting their attention from the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) to the DPJ. If the DPJ lowers barriers to reaching a settlement at the talks, the party could invite farmers' mistrust. On the other hand, if it adopts a policy of protecting domestic agriculture, it would give ammunition to the LDP.

If imports of low-priced foreign agricultural products increase, prices on the domestic market will drop and the fiscal burden of a compensation system for individual farmers, the showcase policy, will swell.

The position of the new administration in trade liberalization talks is totally different from the LDP's. The LDP administration, which has heavily relied on agricultural cooperatives for their vote-drawing power and financial strength, has adopted a stance of protecting agriculture at trade talks. However, the DPJ is staying away from agricultural cooperatives, with one party official saying, "Who wants to receive requests from an organization in the opposition camp?" The DPJ will thus shift to a policy of promoting liberalization at the trade talks with the aim of capturing emerging markets for the sake of economic growth in the future. Although it may inherit the LDP administration's policy line for the time being, the undercurrent of Japan's trade policy will likely greatly change due to the change of administration.

DPJ's agricultural policy

The DPJ has set production goals for key agricultural items, such as rice, soy beans and wheat, abolishing the existing rice-reduction program. It plans to employ a system of compensating the income of farm households that cooperated for the policy to cover losses incurred by them due to gaps between the cost of the cultivation of rice and other crops, and their sales prices. This policy was premised on cuts in tariffs on agricultural products through the signing of a free trade agreement (FTA) with the U.S. However, meeting strong opposition from agricultural organizations, the DPJ has revised this policy and decided not to adopt any policies that could undermine agricultural promotion.

Correction

The Sept. 11, 2009, issue indicated the editorial "Don't make the Afghan war the 'Obama War'" appeared in the same day's Tokyo Shimbun. The editorial appeared on Sept. 10.

ROOS